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THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
AND THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE CUBAN CRISIS



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THE ROLE OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
AND THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE CUBAN CRISIS

In his critical policy address to the nation on October 22, 1962 concerning the Soviet military build-up in Cuba, President Kennedy announced that the United States' case for taking decisive action to meet the Soviet threat to the hemisphere would be submitted both to the Organization of American States and to the United Nations Security Council.

As the basis for bringing the issue before the Organization of American States the President cited Articles 6 and 8 of the Rio Treaty, the Inter-American collective defense treaty signed by the American nations in 1947. The Rio Treaty was incorporated into the 1948 Bogota Charter of the Organization of American States (OAS) making the OAS a "regional agency" within the United Nations. The pertinent clause of Article 6 of the Treaty provides that if a situation should arise which might endanger the peace of America, the OAS Organ of Consultation should meet immediately to agree on measures for the common defense and for the maintenance of the peace and security of the continent. Article 8 lists the measures which the Organ of Consultation may authorize, among them: "partial or complete interruption of economic relations or of rail, sea, air, . . . communications; and use of armed force."

The President's decision to submit the case also to the United Nations Security Council rested on Article 40 of the UN Charter, which authorizes the Security Council to call upon countries to

comply "with such provisional measures as it deems necessary or desirable" to prevent an aggravation of a situation which is a threat to or breach of the peace. President Kennedy indicated in his address that the United States was planning to table a resolution in the Security Council calling for the prompt dismantling and withdrawal of all offensive weapons in Cuba under supervision of UN observers as the condition for the lifting of a U.S. quarantine against shipments of offensive military equipment to Cuba.

Why did the United States bring the dispute both to the OAS and to the United Nations? First, recourse to a regional organization or to the United Nations is not necessarily an either-or matter. Relations between regional organizations and the United Nations are governed by Articles 52, 53, and 54 of the UN Charter. Article 52 recognizes the role of regional organizations in dealing with regional matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. Article 53 provides that the Security Council may in fact utilize regional arrangements for enforcement action under its authority. Article 54 requires regional agencies to inform fully the Security Council of actions undertaken or contemplated under them for the maintenance of international peace and security. A nation may, as the United States did, submit a dispute to both, requesting from each separate but compatible courses of action designed to achieve the same end -- the preservation of peace. The October 23 resolution of the OAS Council authorizing the American states to adopt all necessary measures to prevent an

offensive military build-up in Cuba, in fact, included a specific provision noting the Council's decision to inform the Security Council "of this resolution in accordance with Article 54 of the Charter of the United Nations."

The Cuban situation, from the United States point of view, was at one and the same time a regional and an international matter. It was a regional matter because it involved a direct threat to the Western hemisphere. But it was an international issue because the protagonist was the Soviet Union, a power whose interests conflicted with those of the United States in many areas of the world. United States opinion, and certainly European as well, considered it entirely possible that the Soviet response to United States firmness on Cuba would be to exert pressure at another point of conflict, perhaps Berlin. The Cuban problem was viewed in the larger context of the international cold war.

There were additional reasons for submitting the dispute to both forums. It was deemed essential to Western hemisphere relations that the United States seek the concurrence of the OAS in its course of action, for Latin America is notably sensitive to the unilateral exercise of power in this hemisphere by the giant to the north. Furthermore, it was undeniable that the United States position would be strengthened in the eyes of world opinion if it were backed by hemisphere consensus. As for bringing the case before the United Nations, if the United States had not done so, the Soviet Union and Cuba certainly would have, and a great hue and cry about so-called

U.S. aggression.<sup>1/</sup> By including an appeal to the UN in its plan of action the United States was able to present its case as that of the "hurt" party and to preempt any propaganda advantages the Communists might otherwise have had. This was a not insignificant consideration since in the event of a deadlock in the Security Council resulting from a Soviet veto the United States might have wanted to move the debate to the General Assembly where a 2/3 majority of over 100 member states would have been necessary for the adoption of any U.S.-sponsored resolution. A number of the UN members are small powers whose sympathy might have gravitated toward Cuba unless the United States were successful in proving that the issue at hand was not Cuban sovereignty but a Soviet threat to the Western hemisphere.

Finally, the United States was seeking different courses of action from regional and international organizations. From the OAS it wanted Latin American support on the naval quarantine. From the UN it wanted (a) international pressure for the dismantling and removal of Soviet offensive weapons from Cuba, and (b) neutral observers to supervise the process.

It must be noted, however, that in his October 22 address to the nation the President asserted that although the United States was submitting the Cuban issue both to the Organization of American States and to the United Nations, United States determination to act would not be weakened by a paralysis in either organization. The President

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1/ When the Security Council met on October 23 it had before it urgent requests for a meeting on the Cuban situation from the Soviet and Cuban representatives as well as from the United States.

stated decisively that discussion in these forums would be undertaken "without limiting our freedom of action." Thus, the United States would initiate a quarantine on offensive military materials shipped to Cuba with or without the support of the regional or the international organization. In the President's words:

We no longer live in a world where only the actual firing of weapons represents a sufficient challenge to a nation's security as to constitute maximum peril.

Nuclear weapons are so destructive and ballistic missiles are so swift that any substantially increased possibility of their use or any sudden change in their deployment may well be regarded as a definite threat to the peace.

In effect, the President of the United States announced that the Soviet build-up in Cuba was so grave a threat to the security of the United States and of the Western hemisphere as to require unilateral action in self-defense. The terms of the U.S. resolution presented to the Security Council provided that the United States would lift its quarantine when UN observers had verified the dismantling of Soviet bases in Cuba. The United States was not going to sit by and wait for a decision from the world community; the initial action would be unilateral.

#### The Cuban Crisis in the Organization of American States

While the Latin American states have been said to be noticeably less concerned about the Communist threat to the Western hemisphere than the United States, the Organization of American States has at various times, at U.S. urging, denounced communism. The Declaration of Washington which emerged from a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the 21 American republics in April 1951 expressed hemisphere solidarity

in opposing "international communism." The U.S.-sponsored Caracas doctrine adopted at the Tenth Pan-American Conference in 1954 and eventually signed by all the American states declared that international communism was incompatible with the concept of American freedom and that the domination or control of any American state by the international Communist movement would require counter-measures. In July 1957 the Inter-American Defense Board, composed of the military representatives of the 21 American republics, approved a new joint military defense plan based on the premise that Soviet aggression was a continuing threat. But in actual instances of application -- Guatemala, and until the October 1962 crisis, Cuba -- the Latin American response has been less enthusiastic than hoped for by the United States.

Even previous to the October crisis, however, the Organization of American States had taken several steps to counter the Communist threat in Cuba. In April 1961 the Inter-American Defense Board voted to bar the Cuban representative from all secret sessions of the Board and to deny him access to all classified documents dealing with hemispheric defense plans. The Punta del Este conference of American Foreign Ministers held in January 1962 voted to exclude Cuba from participation in the Inter-American system, and the OAS Council in February carried out the resolution of Punta del Este by formally expelling Cuba from the regional organization. One of the resolutions of the Punta del Este conference reaffirmed that "the principles of communism are incompatible with the principles of the Inter-American system."

- 7 -

The language of the final communique issued at the conclusion of an informal meeting of the American Foreign Ministers on October 2 and 3, 1962 was far more forceful. The Foreign Ministers

affirmed the will to strengthen the security of the Hemisphere against all aggression from within or outside the Hemisphere and against all developments or situations capable of threatening the peace and security of the Hemisphere through the application of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance of Rio de Janeiro. It was the view of the Ministers that the existing organizations and bodies of the inter-American system should intensify the carrying out of their respective duties with special and urgent attention to the situation created by the Marxist-Leninist regime in Cuba and that they should stand in readiness to consider the matter promptly if the situation requires measures beyond those already authorized. . . .

The meeting observed that the inter-American regional system has had since its beginnings characteristics of its own that are expressed in specific provisions agreed upon by a community of nations for its collective security and, therefore, that a military intervention of communist powers in Cuba cannot be justified as a situation analogous to the defensive measures adopted in other parts of the Free World in order to face Soviet imperialism. . . .

The meeting recalled that the Soviet Union's intervention in Cuba threatens the unity of the Americas and of its democratic institutions, and that this intervention has special characteristics which . . . call for the adoption of special measures, both individual and collective. 2/

The tone of the October 3 communique hints that the American states were far more seriously worried about the Communist threat from Cuba than previously. While the communique reiterated the usual inter-American "adherence to the principles of self-determination, nonintervention and democracy as guiding standards of relations among the American nations," the keynote was "Soviet imperialism."

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2/ See Department of State Bulletin, October 22, 1962, pp. 599-600.

The principle of nonintervention had been temporarily subordinated, it seems, to the problem of the Soviet threat to the hemisphere.

Thus, when Secretary of State Dean Rusk presented the United States plan before the OAS Council on October 23 there was no opposition. The Council adopted by a 19 - 0 vote <sup>3/</sup> a U.S.-sponsored resolution which: 1) called for "the immediate dismantling and withdrawal from Cuba of all missiles and other weapons with any offensive capability;" 2) recommended "that the member states, in accordance with Articles 6 and 8 of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, take all measures, individually and collectively including the use of armed force" to ensure that Cuba would not continue receiving military supplies from the Soviet bloc which would threaten continental security and "to prevent the missiles in Cuba with offensive capability from ever becoming an active threat to the peace and security of the continent;" 3) decided to inform the Security Council under Article 54 of the UN Charter of this resolution; 4) expressed the hope that the Security Council would dispatch UN observers to Cuba as soon as possible in accordance with the resolution introduced in the Security Council by the United States; and 5) decided to continue to act provisionally as the OAS organ of consultation.

At the Punta del Este meeting in January 1962 only fourteen delegations had supported the proposal for exclusion of Cuba from the Organization of American States. Among the six abstainers were some of the most

<sup>3/</sup> The only country attending the Council meeting which did not vote for the U.S. resolution was Uruguay, and Uruguay's abstention was based on a technicality -- failure to receive instructions in time from her government. Uruguay subsequently added its affirmative vote.

important of the Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico. They opposed Cuba's expulsion as both juridically unsound and politically unacceptable. The United States had hoped at that time to get support for sanctions against Cuba but was unable to. Thus, between January and October 1962 the Latin American attitude had changed. The United States had successfully convinced the other OAS members that the Soviet military build-up in Cuba was a very real threat to the hemisphere. The earnestness of the Latin American response is evidenced by the immediate offers of military aid to the United States quarantine operation from eight Latin American countries: Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela.

#### Conclusions

What is the significance of the role of the OAS in the Cuban crisis? Where consensus and community of interest already exist, the machinery of international organization is simply the instrument of its formalization. This was the case in the OAS with regard to the Cuban crisis: the American continent had become convinced that Soviet offensive capability in Cuba was a threat to the Western hemisphere. The OAS furnished the means for calling together quickly representatives of the American republics to obtain their approval for the United States' plan of action. The Latin American countries were ready to support the United States, and the consultative machinery of the OAS Council was simply the instrumentality for revealing this consensus to the world.

Nonetheless, the unanimity of the response reveals that in spite of North-South tensions within the hemisphere, consensus exists regarding the necessity of keeping an extra-territorial power from gaining a foothold within the Western hemisphere. Latin American support for the U.S. plan of action sets an important precedent; it shows that when faced with an external threat, the American continent does have the will to act in the interests of its collective security.

The Cuban Crisis in the United Nations

1) Before the Security Council. On October 22 the United States sent a letter to the President of the United Nations Security Council requesting that an urgent meeting of the Council be convoked

to deal with the dangerous threat to the peace and security of the world caused by the secret establishment in Cuba by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of launching bases and the installation of long-range ballistic missiles capable of carrying thermonuclear warheads to most of North and South America.

The letter contained a draft resolution which: 1) called for the immediate dismantling and withdrawal of all missiles and other offensive weapons from Cuba as a provisional measure under Article 40 of the UN Charter; 2) authorized and requested U Thant to dispatch a UN observer corps to Cuba to assure compliance with the resolution; 3) agreed to terminate the United States quarantine against military shipments to Cuba upon certification of the removal of all offensive weapons; and 4) urgently recommended consultations between the United States and the Soviet Union "to remove the existing threat to the security of the Western Hemisphere and the peace of the world."

Ambassador Stevenson set forth the United States position in his opening statement before the Security Council, on October 23. Drawing the attention of the Council to President Kennedy's address of the evening before, designating the Soviet military build-up in Cuba a threat to the hemisphere and to the peace of the world, Mr. Stevenson reminded the Council members of previous aggressive acts of the Soviet Union -- in Iran, Eastern Europe, the Far East. The foremost objection of the American states to the Castro regime, he continued, was that Cuba had given the Soviet Union a bridgehead and staging area in the Western hemisphere and had thereby made itself an accomplice in the Communist enterprise of world dominion. There was a vast difference, he stated, between the Soviet bases in Cuba and the NATO bases in parts of the world near the Soviet Union. The NATO sites were established after free negotiation, without concealment, and without false statements to other governments, in order to deter Soviet expansionism. Their creation was consistent with the principles of the United Nations since they left the political institutions of the recipient countries intact and since they were not designed to subvert the territorial integrity or political independence of other states. The Soviet sites in Cuba, on the other hand, introduced a nuclear threat in an area previously free of it and were installed by clandestine means outside existing treaty systems. Mr. Stevenson summed up the United States position thus:

When the Soviet Union sends thousands of military technicians to its puppet in the Western Hemisphere, when it sends jet bombers capable of delivering nuclear weapons, when it installs in Cuba missiles capable of carrying atomic warheads and of obliterating

distant points, when it prepares sites for additional missiles with a range of 2,200 miles, when it does these things under the cloak of secrecy and to the accompaniment of premeditated deception, when its actions are in flagrant violation of the policies of the Organization of American States and of the Charter of the United Nations, this clearly is a threat to this hemisphere. And when it thus upsets the precarious balance in the world, it is a threat to the whole world.

The battle lines were quickly drawn in the Security Council. At the same meeting the delegate of the Soviet Union, Mr. Valerian A. Zorin, charged that United States action toward Cuba was a direct infringement of the freedom and independence of a small country, an extremely dangerous act of aggression, an infraction of the principles of international law, and a violation of the fundamental provisions of the United Nations Charter. The Soviet delegate said that U.S. statements "of some alleged intentions on the part of Cuba or on the part of the Soviet Union, are but a fabrication and a tissue of imaginary dreams." Announcing that the Soviet Union would veto the United States draft resolution, Mr. Zorin introduced an alternate resolution which: condemned the action of the United States as "designed to violate the Charter of the United Nations and designed to intensify the threat of war"; called on the United States to end the quarantine; proposed that the United States halt interference in the domestic affairs of Cuba; and recommended that the United States, Cuba, and the Soviet Union confer "for the purpose of normalizing the situation and thereby removing the threat of war." This resolution was of course unacceptable to the United States.

Thus, with the two great powers engaged in verbal combat from diametrically opposed positions it seemed from the very beginning that

the only possible outcome in the Security Council would be a deadlock. What would happen then? Would the United States propose that the Cuban dispute be turned over to the General Assembly under the terms of the Uniting for Peace resolution?

Actually, this question never came up, for the resolutions have never been put to the vote. The UN spotlight dramatically shifted swiftly from the Security Council to the Secretary-General. After the close of the Security Council meeting on October 23, 40 unaligned nations addressed a request to Secretary-General U Thant to appeal to the United States, the Soviet Union, and Cuba to take no action which would exacerbate the crisis. Accordingly, on October 24 the Secretary-General dispatched identical notes to President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev suggesting the voluntary suspension of all arms shipments to Cuba and of the quarantine measures during a two to three week period; the Secretary-General made himself available to all parties for whatever services he might perform. Mr. Thant also sent a note to Cuba requesting that country to refrain from any action which might aggravate the situation. He reiterated the appeal at a Security Council meeting, on the evening of October 24 and expressed the hope that all the parties concerned would enter into negotiations immediately.

In the Security Council itself the line-up was strongly pro-United States, which was to be expected since seven of the eleven members of the Council are Western-aligned nations. The representatives of Chile, China, France, Ireland, the UK, and Venezuela spoke in defense of the United States' position. Rumania's was the one voice raised in support

of the Soviet Union. The delegates of the United Arab Republic and Ghana -- the two nonaligned members of the Security Council -- remained skeptical of United States' arguments. On October 24 Mr. Mahmoud Riad (United Arab Republic) said:

The Government of the United Arab Republic cannot condone the unilateral decision of the United States of America to exercise the quarantine in the Caribbean sea. This action, we believe, not only is contrary to international law and the accepted norms of freedom of navigation on the high seas, but also leads to a situation which, I am sure representatives of all agree, is pregnant with all the symptoms of increasing world tension and threatens international peace and security.

Mr. Quaison-Sackey of Ghana stated that his delegation felt any attempt to attribute an offensive character to military arrangements such as those Cuba had adopted had to be accompanied by incontrovertible proof; proof of Cuba's offensive designs, in his view, remained in doubt. At the same meeting the delegations of Ghana and the United Arab Republic introduced a draft resolution which requested the Secretary-General to confer with the principal parties concerned on immediate steps to remove the threat to the peace in the Caribbean.

This resolution never came to a vote, however, for it became redundant after the dramatic Security Council meeting of October 25. At that meeting Ambassador Stevenson read a letter from President Kennedy to U Thant indicating U.S. willingness to discuss arrangements for negotiations. On behalf of the Soviet Union, Ambassador Zorin read Chairman Khrushchev's reply to the Secretary-General's peace feeler expressing agreement with U Thant's proposal. But the dramatic climax was still to come. After asking Mr. Zorin if he would deny that the

Soviet Union had placed medium and intermediate-range missiles and sites in Cuba and adding that he was prepared to wait for an answer "until Hell freezes over," Mr. Stevenson displayed photographs of missile launching sites and airfields, medium-range missiles and Ilyushin-28 bombers. Mr. Zorin neither explicitly denied nor admitted the evidence. His answer to the question was:

We have no need to deploy anywhere, including Cuba, any of our powerful rockets and delivery vehicles. Accordingly, the questions which Mr. Stevenson attempted to put are in fact purely rhetorical.

Mr. Zorin intimated that the photographs were forged and that their display was an attempt to detract the Council from the principal issue, U.S. violation of the principles of international law and of the UN Charter. In reply, Mr. Stevenson said that if the Soviet Union would ask its Cuban colleagues to permit a UN team to inspect the sites shown in the photographs, the United States could easily direct the team to the proper places. Mr. Stevenson added that the purpose of the Security Council was not to score debating points but to save the peace, and that the United States was ready to try if the Soviet Union was.

On this note the Security Council was adjourned pending the results of discussions between the Secretary-General and the principals to the dispute. This was the end -- temporarily at least -- of the Security Council phase of involvement in the Cuban crisis.

What had the Security Council accomplished? It had adopted no resolution. It had done none of the things requested in the United States or Soviet resolutions except what was common to both of them -- it had set the stage for consultations. Once again it was revealed that

in any instance of great power conflict the solution of the problem depends on the willingness of the powers concerned to resolve their differences. Nonetheless the Security Council had performed a function. It had provided the principals to the dispute with a forum in which to let off steam. More important still, it had made available mediatory machinery in the person of the Secretary-General. The world was hopeful of a peaceful solution to the Cuban crisis. The question now was what the role of the United Nations would be in achieving a solution.

2) Negotiations. For a while it looked as though U Thant and the United Nations might become central actors in the Caribbean drama. In reply to a further appeal to the Soviet Union and the United States, on October 26 the Secretary-General received a pledge from Chairman Khrushchev that Soviet ships would stay away from the U.S. blockade area for the time being and an assurance from President Kennedy that the United States would try to avoid a direct confrontation at sea "in the next few days." Also on October 26 U Thant sent a note to Premier Castro in which he pointed out that the Premier could make a significant contribution to the peace by directing that the construction of military facilities in Cuba be suspended during the negotiation period. Castro's reply included an invitation to the Secretary-General to visit Cuba to discuss the crisis. On the 27th U Thant accepted the invitation, indicating: "I hope to bring a few aides with me and to leave some of them behind to continue our common effort toward the peaceful solution of the problem."

October 30 was set as the date for U Thant's visit, which was expected to be of two to three days duration.

It soon became apparent, however, that during the negotiation period as well as in the earlier crisis days the United Nations would be simply a sort of shadow play to events on the bilateral Moscow-Washington scene. While the debate was going on in the Security Council the decisive happening had not been the tabling of the U.S. and Soviet resolutions or even U.S. and Soviet acceptance of U Thant's mediatory offer. The important first step toward a *détente* had been the Soviet decision to allow its ships to be searched and to order others to turn back from Cuba. But the Soviets were continuing construction of missile facilities in Cuba -- President Kennedy pointed out this fact to U Thant in his October communication to the Secretary-General. A New York Times report of October 27 observed: U.S. officials had indicated that unless work on Cuban missile sites was soon halted, the United States would have to consider further action toward achieving its objective of eliminating the missiles. The report continued:

These and other developments strengthened the impression in the capital that the Government was looking beyond the effort to settle the Cuban crisis at the United Nations and toward the possibility of further direct action by the United States.

The London Times of the same day expressed the view that direct U.S. military intervention in Cuba could not be ruled out:

A military force with sufficient ships and aircraft, is now poised in Florida for any action that the President may order. There are strong indications that the order for some kind of intervention will be given during the weekend.

But the order for intervention was never given, for on October 23, two days before U Thant's departure for Havana, the real break in the crisis came with Chairman Khrushchev's announcement in a letter to President Kennedy that he had ordered Soviet missile bases in Cuba to be dismantled; Khrushchev agreed to UN verification. This pledge cleared up the week-end confusion in Washington which had resulted from a private Khrushchev message to President Kennedy on October 26 agreeing to the dismantling of the Cuban missile bases under UN inspection in return for a U.S. guarantee not to invade Cuba and a conflicting public message of the 27th proposing the removal of U.S. bases in Turkey as a quid pro quo for the withdrawal of Soviet offensive weapons from Cuba. The latter proposal was of course immediately rejected by the Kennedy Administration. The U.S. reply was to Khrushchev's private letter; it indicated that the United States found "generally acceptable" Khrushchev's proposal of the 26th.

Thus, the crucial channel leading to the détente was the direct exchange of communications between President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev. It is possible that the firmness of U.S. statements at the UN was a factor in convincing the Soviet Union of the U.S. determination to get rid of Soviet offensive weapons in Cuba. It is probable that the reaction of the nonaligned nations to the photographic evidence of the Cuban missile sites -- their skepticism turned to acceptance of the U.S. arguments when confronted with visual proof of Soviet military activity in Cuba -- was a stimulus to the Soviet Union to back down and try to pose as peacemaker. Consultations of the Secretary-General with the UN representatives of the Soviet Union,

the United States, and Cuba may have been another factor. but it is indisputable that the crucial factors were the U.S. President's notes to the Kremlin and the U.S. deployment of military forces. By October 28 Khrushchev evidently had become convinced that the United States really meant business and that if the Soviet Union did not capitulate on its Cuban bases the United States would resort to further direct action to get rid of them.

The immediate effect of the Soviet agreement to withdraw its missiles in return for a U.S. no-invasion pledge was to switch the spotlight once more to the United Nations, to U Thant's visit to Havana. Attention now turned to the problem of UN on-site inspection to ensure that the Soviet Union complied with its pledge. The outlook was none too propitious, however, for it soon seemed as though Castro might become the stumbling block in the negotiations, particularly if Moscow's intentions were equivocal and the Kremlin was willing to support his demands. In a public statement issued on October 28 Premier Castro listed five demands which he considered necessary to the resolution of the crisis: 1) end of all measures of commercial and economic pressure; 2) end of all subversive activities; 3) end of "private" attacks carried out from U.S. and Puerto Rican bases; 4) end of all violations of air and naval space by U.S. planes and ships; and 5) U.S. withdrawal from Guantanamo. Obviously as far as the United States was concerned these conditions were not negotiable but were actually irrelevant to the Kennedy-Khrushchev agreement.

Just how big a problem Castro would be became evident as soon as U Thant began discussions with him. Castro would hear nothing of UN inspectors on Cuban soil. On October 31 the Secretary-General returned to New York -- the aides he had intended to leave in Cuba also came back -- to report that Soviet missiles were being dismantled; the inspection issue had not been resolved. Washington announced that the arms blockade and air surveillance suspended during U Thant's visit would be resumed on the following day. Moscow announced that First Deputy Premier Anastas Mikoyan was being sent to Havana to confer with Castro; the press in the United States was wondering if Mikoyan would try to secure Castro's agreement to inspection.

Again the spotlight shifted from the Secretary-General to the U.S.-Soviet Union-Cuba diplomatic axis, and this time the shift of focus looked permanent -- unless Mikoyan secured Castro's agreement to inspection by a UN observer corps. But after close to a month of Soviet-Cuban talks, during which even the International Red Cross, or alternatively, the ambassadors of neutral nations in Havana had been suggested as possible inspection teams, the inspection issue still had not been resolved. In fact, Mikoyan had publicly expressed support for Castro's five conditions. The only Cuban concession on inspection -- if indeed it could be called a concession -- was a Cuban proposal offering to permit UN verification of the removal of missiles from Cuba if the United States would agree to UN supervision of the dismantling of "anti-Castro training bases" on United States and Puerto Rican soil. This proposal was unacceptable to the United States.

Hopes that U Thant's visit to Havana would lead to agreement on UN inspection or that Mikoyan's visit would result in Castro's capitulation were probably far too optimistic. First of all, it is not entirely clear that the Soviet Union was willing to accept UN verification if it could get away with something less. On-site inspection may have sounded to the Soviet Union like an uncomfortable precedent from which parallels could only too easily be drawn in disarmament talks. Once the crisis had subsided and serious negotiations had begun between the United States and the Soviet Union the Kremlin may have preferred to encourage Castro's dissidence. In addition, it is not surprising that Castro would try to salvage something from the wreckage. His prestige had received considerable damage by the Soviet decision to withdraw its offensive military weapons from Cuba. Allowing international inspectors on Cuban soil would be an additional sign of Castro's impotence in the arena of international politics. To expect a facile solution to the verification problem through the quick dispatch of a UN observer corps was to oversimplify an extremely complex issue.

If there was to be no UN presence in Cuba, what then might the role of the UN be in solving the remaining issues in the dispute? If U Thant was not to be a leading actor, would he play a part at all?

Technically negotiations throughout have been within the framework of the United Nations. The Secretary-General has been kept informed of their progress. U Thant has at times been the intermediary through whom messages have been sent from one of the principals to the others; Cuban statements and proposals destined for the United States have been

sent to the Secretary-General. Soviet and U.S. representatives have conferred with Mr. Thant from time to time. The UN has been there, vaguely as it were, in the background, but the tough negotiations have taken place between the Soviet and U.S. negotiators designated specially for the purpose or directly between Moscow and Washington.

On October 29 President Kennedy appointed a three-man coordinating committee to carry on negotiations with the UN Secretary-General and the Soviet envoy. John J. McCloy, former disarmament adviser, headed the committee, which also included Under Secretary of State George Ball and Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric. Messrs. Ball and Gilpatric, as well as Ambassador Stevenson, had been present at the emergency National Security Council meetings at which the U.S. crisis policy on Cuba was formulated. Mr. McCloy was attached to the U.S. delegation to the UN in the capacity of adviser on Cuba to Ambassador Stevenson. While the chief U.S. negotiator throughout has been Mr. McCloy, Ambassador Stevenson and deputy UN representative Charles Yost also conferred in the talks with the Soviet representative. On the Soviet side, Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Kuznetsov was appointed as Premier Khrushchev's special envoy to negotiate on the dismantling of the Soviet bases in Cuba.

Even then the negotiators in New York have appeared secondary to the direct exchange of communications between Moscow and Washington. Chalmers Roberts observed in the Washington Post on November 16:

What has become somewhat clearer is that the main thrust of the Soviet-American negotiations has been between Washington and Moscow and on a good many occasions directly between the two top leaders.

The talks at the U.N. between U.S. representatives and Vasily Kuznetsov, the Soviet diplomat sent to New York by Khrushchev to deal with the Cuban crisis, appear to have been very secondary though usefully related to the Washington-Moscow contact.

At each important step in the resolution of the crisis a detente was reached through a direct exchange of letters between Chairman Khrushchev and President Kennedy. On November 4 Mr. McCloy, by instruction of President Kennedy, warned Mr. Kuznetsov that the Cuban crisis could again become acute if the Soviets did not remove their jet bombers from Cuba. Announcement on Soviet agreement to withdrawal of the bombers came on November 20 -- not through U.S. negotiators at the UN, however, but at a televised presidential news conference in which President Kennedy reported that he had ordered the lifting of the naval blockage of Cuba after being informed by Premier Khrushchev earlier that day that all the Soviet bombers would be withdrawn from Cuba within 30 days. Correspondence between the American and Soviet head of state had evidently been continuous; Max Frankel stated in the New York Times on November 11: "President Kennedy is still exchanging secret letters with Premier Khrushchev."

Bilateral negotiations between Moscow and Havana also, it would seem, played a part in smoothing out this particular wrinkle in the agreement. Castro's initial reaction to Mr. McCloy's warning of November 4 was that the bombers were Cuban property. By November 19, however, Castro had backed down and sent a note to U Thant stating Cuba would not object if

the Soviet Union removed the bombers. U.S. officials and the U.S. press were quick to note that Castro's message to the Secretary-General was dispatched within hours of a suddenly convoked conference between Castro and Mikoyan in Havana.

The process of reconciliation has turned out to be a long and arduous one. Nearly two months after President Kennedy's October 22 speech there are still several basic issues outstanding. More dependable verification of the removal of offensive weapons than the sea and aerial inspection undertaken thus far and adequate means of detecting the re-entry into Cuba of offensive weapons have not been agreed upon. In the absence of such an agreement the United States has refused to make a formal guarantee that it will not invade Cuba. At a press conference held on December 10 Secretary of State Rusk indicated, however, that the one decisive remaining obstacle to settlement of the Cuban issue was the continuing presence of Soviet military forces in Cuba in spite of Premier Khrushchev's pledge that they would be withdrawn. Although Secretary Rusk observed that Soviet failure to provide for verification of the weapons removal was "a very serious deficiency," he reportedly made it clear that the United States would not press further for verification but would continue aerial reconnaissance over Cuba as a substitute.

Meanwhile, the UN is still hovering in the background. The Security Council is to be recalled eventually to hear a report on the negotiations but the press has stated that the Soviet Union and the United States are attempting to come closer to final agreement before reporting to the Council. In his December 10 press conference Secretary Rusk indicated

that the Security Council would probably meet in a week to 10 days to hear statements by the Soviet Union and the United States on the conclusion of the negotiations.

Conclusions

In emphasizing that the crucial decisions in the Cuban crisis have emerged from a direct exchange of notes between President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev, one should not underestimate the importance of the negotiations between Mr. McCloy and Mr. Kuznetsov at the UN as supporting measures. During the period in which the United States was trying to get a Soviet pledge to withdraw its bombers from Cuba, for example, long negotiating sessions were held between McCloy and Kuznetsov in New York. Important aspects of the agreement may well have been worked out in these discussions.

In addition, while U Thant's role as an intermediary is difficult to assess and while it may not have been a crucial one in the Soviet-U.S. negotiations, nonetheless the fact that his services were available was of significance, particularly in the early stages of the crisis. Perhaps one important aspect of the United Nations role in the crisis was the mere fact of the UN's existence. It allowed a breathing space in those first crisis hours. It provided a forum where the principals could lash at each other verbally while Washington and Moscow could hammer out a policy of challenge and response. The stage-show in the UN Security Council gave Washington and Moscow time to analyze their positions, to evaluate the intentions of the other, and to avoid the

immediate response that upon further examination might have proved too great a risk in terms of long-range foreign policy objectives. The mediation of the Secretary-General too -- although it was unsuccessful in terms of its main objective: the establishment of a UN observer corps in Cuba -- gave the principal powers time to establish their own negotiating framework and to set in motion the process of reconciliation.

While the Cuban crisis once again revealed that the great powers will not place their national security interests in the hands of the United Nations, it also showed that the powers cannot totally ignore the world organization.